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Difference Against Development: Spiritual Accumulation and the Politics of Freedom

John Kraniauskas

Paul Ricoeur's account of the end of Hegelianism in his *Time and Narrative* is summarized in the following paragraph: "It now seems to us as though Hegel, seizing a favourable moment, a *kairos*, which has been revealed for what it was to our perspective and our experience, only totalized a few leading aspects of the spiritual history of Europe and of its geographical and historical environment, ones that, since that time, have come undone. What has come undone is the very substance of what Hegel sought to make into a concept. Difference has turned against development conceived of as a *Stufengang* [a "succession of stages"]." In Ricoeur's statement, the historical experience of postcolonialism critically encounters Hegelian dialectics, reducing its claims to universality back to particularity in a gesture Dipesh Chakrabarty has referred to as "provincializing Europe."¹ There has been a crisis, both historical and philosophical, in the Eurocen-

1. Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, vol. 3, trans. Kathleen Blamey and David Pellauer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 204–5; and Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2000). Hereafter, Ricoeur's work is cited parenthetically as *TN*.

trism ("spirit") that upholds Hegel's concept of reason and its developmental unfolding (which, as we shall see, is an unfolding of freedom), a crisis that has not only interrupted philosophy's (Hegelian) realization but also revealed its constituent unrealizability.² Ricoeur is referring to the combined effects of the First World War, the Russian Revolution, the rise of fascism, the Second World War and the Holocaust, as well as to the emergence of anticolonial struggles in Africa and Asia. All have combined to produce an effect of decentering and the independence of "difference" from dialectical capture. This is one of the main reasons why so much contemporary philosophy and theory defines itself as explicitly anti-Hegelian. Although, alternatively, in Hegelian mode, one might also suggest that this "turning against" may be nothing more than the cunning work of reason.

What follows are a series of reflections on Ricoeur's statement. I begin with a description of Hegel's philosophical prose of world history as contained in his most popular work, *The Philosophy of History*, in an attempt to unpack the *political* significance of the idea of "development" in history. This is crucial, because what is "developed" in Hegel's world history is the history of "freedom." Second, I will outline other kinds of conceptual interruption of Hegel's temporalization of history associated, in particular, with the idea of its materialist "inversion"—those of Marx, Adorno, and Mario Tronti—focusing especially on Louis Althusser's direct confrontation with the Hegelian side of Marxism contained in his demand to think history differentially and *conjuncturally*. This account provides the occasion to question Ricoeur's statement and suggest instead that difference turns against development as *more development* (arguably the more important postcolonial experience). This, I argue, is the implication of the most radical aspects of subalternist critique, which emerges from such a historical recognition in neocolonial times to present itself as what might be described as a *disjunctural* critique of the total apparatus of development conceived as the imperial time of capital. In *Spectral Nationality*, Pheng Cheah has suggested that subalternism is characterized by an antiphilosophical outlook.³ I will argue, in contrast, that the work of critics such as Chakrabarty, Ranajit Guha, and

2. In his *Negative Dialectics*, trans. E. B. Ashton (London: Routledge, 1973), Theodor Adorno registers this historical moment as follows: "Philosophy, which once seemed obsolete, lives on because the moment to realize it was missed" (3).

3. Pheng Cheah, *Spectral Nationality: Passages of Freedom from Kant to Postcolonial Literatures of Liberation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003). The difference between Cheah and radical subalternism is his defense of the nation-form.

Gayatri Spivak constitutes an intense engagement with the philosophy of history (particularly historicism), reconceived from the standpoint of the cultural politics of historiographical and literary form and its colonial/imperial content. The key (and most insistent) question articulated by their *disjuncturalist* critique is: What kinds of subjects are “possible” subjects of freedom? Insofar as their work poses such a question anew from an antidevelopmentalist perspective, one might suggest that they also posit the conditions for a possible new *subaltern* post-Hegelian world history. From this perspective, what is at stake in Hegel’s philosophy of world history is the question of emancipatory political subjectivity.

Development

“A State is a realization of Spirit, such that in it the self-conscious being of Spirit—the freedom of the will—is realized as Law,” writes Hegel in his discussion and comparison of Chinese and Hindoo [*sic*] civilizations.⁴ This definition of the state is important for a number of reasons, the most important being that it helps us understand that, in offering it, Hegel is comparing a civilization that has history with another that does not. China, he insists, has a state. Indeed, as a despotic state, in Hegel’s view, it “may be regarded as nothing else but a state” (*PH*, 161). “Hindoo” civilization, on the other hand, may constitute a people, but it is not a state. This is because, he insists, Indian society has not been established on the basis of law (that is, freedom as abstract will) or of spiritual self-consciousness (subjective freedom) in opposition to nature. China, it follows from this argument, has history, while India does not—the historicity of each (or lack of it) established in relation to predominant forms of political subjectivity (the self-consciousness of freedom—even if this refers, as in Hegel’s China, only to the “freedom” of an emperor—as expressed in state form).

What is the relation Hegel establishes between history and the state? It is clearly fundamental, for the state form establishes a principle of freedom that becomes history’s condition. In this respect, Hegel *is* a state thinker, history emerging in this first stage of its development in China as the history of despotic “freedom” (and “law”) experienced, he also notes, as unfreedom (because, Hegel is clear, history is not a “theatre of happiness” [*PH*,

4. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, trans. J. Sibree (New York: Dover Publications, 1956), 160. This English translation is based on Karl Hegel’s German edition of 1840. Hereafter, this work is cited parenthetically as *PH*.

26]).⁵ This also means, however, that history is a social institution, in which what has happened and its experience and narration—that is, history in both its meanings as a concept—are gathered together in writing. The stately archive, so important to Michel de Certeau's analysis of the emergence of modern history writing, thus has a history too.⁶ In Ricoeur's words, the state is "the historical configuration where the idea and its satisfaction ["the cunning of reason"] come together" (*TN*, 197). Hegel writes:

[I]t is the State which first presents subject-matter that is not only *adapted* to the prose of History, but involves the production of such history in the very progress of its own being. Instead of merely subjective mandates on the part of the government . . . a community that is acquiring a stable existence, and exalting itself into a State, requires formal commands and laws . . . and this produces a record as well as interest concerned with intelligent, definite . . . lasting transactions and occurrences; on which Mnemosyne, for the behoof of the perennial object of the formation and constitution of the State, is impelled to confer perpetuity. (*PH*, 61)

This is the place, therefore, as Ricoeur notes, where historical time becomes one—as a collective singular—uniting the freedom of the Spirit with the passion of individuals (*TN*, 197). From this point of view, the state is a recording machine, and all of history's determinations, such as time and freedom, pass through it. The state contains and orders the former—because, left to its own devices, time, like Chronos, devours, it is a force of nature (*PH*, 75–76)—while it enshrines freedom as law. "The State," writes Hegel, is "the embodiment of rational freedom, realizing and recognizing itself in an objective form" (*PH*, 47).

The history of freedom, in turn, is the history of spirit—the objective content of Hegel's secular history—which realizes itself in and through itself, for itself, as freedom.⁷ As Cheah has shown, this idea of spirit is "organismic" and derived from Kant's notion of culture as formation (*Bildung*), outlined in the second part of his *Critique of Judgement*, "Critique of Teleo-

5. Crucially, for Hegel, freedom is not merely an individual attribute but a social condition that must be instituted.

6. See Michel de Certeau, *The Writing of History*, trans. Tom Conley (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988). Such a gathering in the state produces a subject position, that of the absolutist monarch—whose temporality, with Machiavelli, becomes secular (7)—and its documentation (or archive) (74).

7. See Michael Inwood, *A Hegel Dictionary* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999), 47.

logical Judgement,” and which takes the life of the self-recursive organism as its model. In opposition to mechanical natural causality, the organism is self-originating and self-organizing, positing its own limits and setting its own ends. Nature’s teleological end, according to Kant, is the happiness of “man,” and this organicizing power (the “aptitude” of “determining ends” out of itself) is “nature’s gift” to the human race. Kant refers to it, following Johann Friedrich Blumenbach, as a “formative drive,” or *Bildungstreib*.⁸ According to Cheah, this is an “incarnational” and “self-originating” conception of culture, which in Kant becomes the model of autonomy, moral freedom, and the transcendence of finitude, as well as the ontological ground for “culture’s cobelonging with politics” as *Bildung*. And since for Kant “the constitutional political body is culture’s highest achievement,” its “organismic causality” becomes “the ontological paradigm and ultimate end of the ideal constitutional state.”⁹ The writings of Fichte and Hegel give sociological shape to Kant’s abstract cosmopolitanism, incarnating freedom in either the people-nation (Fichte) or the ideal state as the unity of sovereign will and political constitution (Hegel).

However, such an organicist process of self-positing, differentiation, and mediated self-unification (the positing of ends and their immanent transcendence: Spirit-as-Freedom-in-State-as-Right-is-History . . .) is perhaps one of the reasons why Adorno, for his part, suggests that when, in Hegel’s panlogistic prose of world history, we read the word *freedom*, we would do better to read “big guns”: “the idea of a positivity that can master everything that opposes it through the superior power of a comprehending spirit is the mirror image of the experience of the superior coercive force inherent in everything that exists by virtue of its consolidation under domination. This is the truth of Hegel’s untruth.”¹⁰ The fact that in Hegel’s philosophical history, world history emerges in despotism and “ends” in constitutional

8. Immanuel Kant, *The Critique of Judgement*, trans. James Creed Meredith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), 92–97, paragraph 83. Culture, in turn (and this is the beginning of Cheah’s deconstruction of Kant’s account), depends on a founding “ingratitude” toward nature’s gift, which, since it “cannot give itself to us in any other way but mechanically,” takes the form of a retroactive anthropomorphism or mimeticism that paradoxically erases human heteronomy (its finitude) with regard to the contingency of nature’s gift conceived contradictorily as “inhuman *techné*” (Cheah, *Spectral Nationality*, 110–11).

9. Cheah, *Spectral Nationality*, 61–113. See Immanuel Kant, “Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Intent,” in *Perpetual Peace and Other Essays*, trans. Ted Humphrey (Indianapolis, Ind.: Hackett Publishing Company, 1992), 31–34.

10. Theodor Adorno, *Hegel: Three Studies*, trans. Shierry Weber Nicholsen (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1993), 87.

monarchy would seem to confirm Adorno's truth. Which brings us back to Hegel's comparison of China and India.

Hegel's world history is not, however, just a history of the state as an administrative or repressive apparatus. As the conceptual affinity between Kant's idea of culture and Hegel's idea of spirit suggests, it is a history of spirit as state form from the point of view of its constitution—despotic, aristocratic, republican, and monarchic—as *politically mediated subjectivity*.¹¹ If India is a “people” without a state, China is a state without a people, for there is no “free will.” Paradoxically, this is what constitutes India's advance on China with respect to its “political life” (*PH*, 144). Hegel's explanation of China's underdevelopment in this regard is that the unity of China's despotic state is not mediated by the “divergence into difference” that “free subjectivity” (*PH*, 144–45) entails and that would make it into a social system. China has a vast and meticulous archive, but it reflects only the limitless power of the emperor.¹² India, on the other hand, has great poetry, in Hegel's view, reflecting the power of an “untamed” popular imagination still, however, in thrall to nature. And, famously, for Hegel, the idea of the “people” “refers to that category of citizens *who do not know their own will*.”¹³ Thus, history emerges with despotic state form, rather than with a people constituted “irrationally” through *castes*—which betrays a lack of self-differentiation from nature in its constitution—and whose subjective relation to “freedom” thus remains unmediated and unbound by the abstract(ing) quality of law. India's historical advance therefore does not constitute a development and so remains, paradoxically, ahistorical. In this sense, Hegel's comparison also reveals how development in the course of history “is not a chronological sequence” (nor an evolution) but what Ricoeur refers to as “a winding up that is at the same time an unfolding, a process of making explicit, and a return upon itself of the spirit” (*TN*, 201), that is, a *realization*.

It is thus not the case that Hegel's prose is indifferent to difference as such. His state-centered account of Spirit, rather, incorporates difference into its plot so as, for example, to leave it behind as prehistory. From this

11. For Gillian Rose, Hegel's concept of spirit is cultural insofar as it is actualized in a dialectics of recognition and misrecognition. See her *Hegel Contra Sociology* (London: Athlone Press, 1981).

12. For which, see Kenneth Dean and Brian Massumi, *The First and Last Emperors: The Absolute State and the Body of the Despot* (New York: Autonomedia, 1992).

13. G. W. F. Hegel, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, ed. Allen W. Wood, trans. H. B. Nisbet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 340.

point of view, difference is fundamental to the idea of development in history, establishing a temporal principle of comparativity necessary to charting its "course" through stages. Hegel's prose is rather indifferent to the difference of difference from the point of view of the *present* realization of Spirit—insofar, that is, as the present state form constitutes a synthesis of the different moments of the development of Spirit as freedom (everything else remains unhistorical, even if contemporary). History therefore becomes a formative process, a *Bildung*, into freedom. Hegel's definition of the state in his account of the historicity of the Oriental World thus works retrospectively, arranging it in critical and historical perspective, and prospectively, so as also to illuminate the "modern" Northern European endpoint from where World History is articulated. China and India (as well as Greece and Rome) qua civilizations are definitely *past*, but they also embody identifiable stages (at times emplotted in the form of a maturation: childhood, boyhood, manhood, old age) leading up to the present. In terms of its defining politico-juridical values, then, Hegel's philosophy of history is present-centered—the "end" that receives the past, provides perspective, and from where it emplots its own realization. In other words, it is a genealogy that, as Adorno notes, "takes the side of what exists."¹⁴

The idea of development thus gives cultural and political shape to the history of spirit—as subjective freedom—as it is "incarnated" (to use Cheah's term) in state form, that is, as right. In response to Joseph McCarney's insistence that ". . . racist assumptions are not merely otiose in Hegel's argument and lacking in textual warrant . . . [t]hey would also directly contradict the universalism of his philosophy of spirit with its central themes of freedom as the birthright of all . . . ,"¹⁵ Robert Bernasconi has insisted, on the contrary, that it is precisely this contradiction—between freedom (universality) and its (racist and/or culturalist) limitation—that characterizes the philosophies of both Hegel and Kant (among others).¹⁶ More

14. Adorno, *Hegel: Three Studies*, 85.

15. Joseph McCarney, *Hegel on History* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), 145.

16. Robert Bernasconi, "Hegel's Racism: A Reply to McCarney," *Radical Philosophy* 119 (May/June 2003): 35–37. See also his "Will the Real Kant Please Stand Up: The Challenge of Enlightenment Racism to the Study of the History of Philosophy," *Radical Philosophy* 117 (January/February 2003): 13–22, where he points out the importance of "investigating Kant's racism in its coexistence with cosmopolitanism" (17). In his *A Kant Dictionary* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1995), Howard Caygill has also noted that Kant's concept of culture as *Bildung* is also socially divided between those who have it through "discipline" and those who service the latter with their "skill" and are not so blessed (145–50). See Kant, *The Critique of Judgement*, 95–96.

specifically, Hegel's well-known expulsion of a supposedly uncivilized Africa from world history and his suggestion that slavery "frees" Africans from subjection to their own environment are shown, through a detailed reading of his sources, to be based on highly exaggerated accounts of fetishism and cannibalistic colonial fantasies, as well as on the deliberate ignorance of alternative contemporary accounts. "The principle of *Development*," Hegel writes, "involves . . . the existence of a latent germ of being—a capacity or potentiality striving to realize itself." This is a potentiality—or, in Kant's terms, "nature's gift" qua self-formative drive—that Africans are denied in his philosophy. "This formal conception," he continues, "finds actual existence in Spirit, which has the History of the World for its theatre, its possession and the sphere of its realization" (*PH*, 54). Which is also why, in Hegel's view, America has no history either, because it belongs to a future which has as yet no claims on his present. It "performs" still, in his example of the Jesuit civilizing mission in Paraguay, to a colonial—that is, European—bell.¹⁷

Bernasconi points out that Kant's teleological account of culture in the *Critique of Judgement* extends and transforms ideas first established in Kant's production of the modern concept of "race"—for example, in "On the Use of Teleological Principles in Philosophy," written in 1788—and, as we have seen, this is the organismic account taken over by Hegel into his spiritualized conceptualization of freedom in history.¹⁸ Bernasconi concludes that "questions remain about the extent to which contemporary ideas, for example of social development, remain tied to a model that can best be described as colonialist."¹⁹ Although he breaks off from demonstrating precisely how Hegel's racist and colonialist use of sources marks his conceptual production and his ideas of spirit, freedom, and universality as such,

17. Hegel writes: "When the Jesuits and the Catholic clergy proposed to accustom the Indians to European culture and manners . . . they commenced a close intimacy with them, and prescribed for them the duties of the day, which, slothful though their disposition was, they complied with under the authority of the Friars. These prescripts (at midnight a bell had to remind them even of their matrimonial duties), were first, and very wisely, directed to the creation of wants—the springs of human activity generally" (*PH*, 81–82).

18. See Robert Bernasconi, "Hegel at the Court of the Ashanti," in *Hegel After Derrida*, ed. Stuart Barnett (London and New York: Routledge, 1998), 41–63. See also "Who Invented the Concept of Race? Kant's Role in the Enlightenment Construction of Race," in *Race*, ed. Robert Bernasconi (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell Publishers, 2001), 11–36. Bernasconi shows that Kant's scientific concept of "race" both "secured the unity of humanity as a natural genus" and established "deviations within this genus which maintain themselves over protracted generations" (22).

19. Bernasconi, "Hegel at the Court of the Ashanti," 63.

he more or less hints at its certain presence. In my view, there can be little doubt that Hegel's idea of *development*—as set out in *The Philosophy of History*—constitutes such a key philosophical site in which the contradiction between universal freedom and racism is played out, conceptually managed, and given historical form. From this point of view, the concept of development is haunted by a racialization of spirit and freedom that is enacted through an originary and founding expulsion.²⁰

Like the idea of culture itself, however, “development” arguably remains an important, even necessary, concept (it has sedimented itself into so many theoretical discourses that it is extremely difficult to dispense with), which, if irreducible to its racist history, nevertheless bears such historical experiences that it demands both theoretical and historical reflexivity in its use. In other words, thus “scarified” by history, it acquires a historicity of its own and articulates a need for a politics of theory.

The idea of development is crucial to the prose of world history, providing it with an Imperial grammar of spatiotemporal organization and comparison. First, according to Hegel, development implies “perfectibility” and “gradation” in the history of spirit: “a series of increasingly adequate expressions or manifestations of Freedom, which result from its Idea” (*PH*, 63)—which also implies inadequate expressions. Second, development gives direction to history's movement and change: self-determining and “at war with itself” (*PH*, 55), writes Hegel, spirit “assumes successive forms which it successfully transcends; and by this very process of transcending its earlier stages, gains an affirmative, and, in fact, a richer and more concrete shape” (*PH*, 63). The idea of development emplots each stage geohistorically, joining and separating the history of “worlds” across space and time into a narrative full of cultural and political meaning. It is in contemporary, “modern time”—where Hegel's history ends—that the final “shape” of spirit and freedom are realized. And as Hegel brings his history to a conclusion, he makes an important point that foregrounds the “cobelonging of politics and culture” as *Bildung*: “For it is a false principle that the fetters which bind Right and Freedom can be broken without the emancipation of conscience—that there can be Revolution without Reformation” (*PH*, 453). Revolution—the French Revolution²¹—has produced new bourgeois juridico-political structures, and

20. See Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994). It seems to me that one of the key implications of this book is the warning that whenever one says “culture,” one is also saying “race.”

21. Susan Buck-Morss has recently suggested that Hegel might also have been influenced by the Haitian Revolution, such that with the section on the master-slave dialectic in his

Reformation—the Protestant Reformation—has produced new free subjects. In Germany, they have come together in a particularly happy way, producing its constitutional monarchy and Hegel's own *Philosophy of History*. As mentioned above, this would constitute an “adequate” expression of the freedom of the spirit. In other European nations (and beyond), however, for example in Spain, the imposition of postrevolutionary law is resisted by unreformed subjects—an “inadequate” expression of the freedom of the spirit. This disjuncture between right and culture, between enlightened law and subjectivity, remains crucial as a historical experience: the supposed mismatch (“uneven development”)—the product of such a developmentalist imaginary—a central concern for many nation builders and postcolonial thinkers as they seek to impose “modern” states and bourgeois “freedoms.”

Finally, the idea of development also points to a moment of self-reflexivity in history's unfolding as it turns back on itself to recover the historical within history from the point of view of state form (or instituted freedom). In this sense, “development” captures time, reducing it to mere means, and eternalizes the historical present by erasing the impact on it both of the past as past—that is, as different from the present because, now, unhistorical—and of the future. Developmentalism may thus be conceived, in Hegel's account, as the geohistorical consciousness of modernity, which, on the one hand, takes the form of its tradition and, on the other, is promoted as policy. In other words, it is a “bad modernity.”²² From a subalternist point of view, insofar as Hegel's idea of development provides the present with a myth of politico-cultural *spiritual accumulation*, it is also a powerful ideology.

Materialist Inversions

From its beginnings in China and India, the first two steps taken by Spirit, Hegel traces the history of the development of world history as the

Phenomenology of Spirit, “philosophy burst out of the confines of academic theory and became a commentary on the history of the world.” See Susan Buck-Morss, “Hegel and Haiti,” *Critical Inquiry* 26, no. 4 (Summer 2000): 852. By the time of the *Philosophy of History*, however, Buck-Morss notes that Hegel, who was “always a cultural racist if not a biological one,” had conceded to “slavery's continuance” (864). There is some debate, however, about whether Hegel's model is not in fact based on feudalism and its political overthrow. For an alternative view on Hegel and Haiti, see Sibylle Fischer's recent *Modernity Disavowed: Haiti and the Cultures of Slavery in the Age of Revolution* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2004), 24–33.

22. See Peter Osborne, *The Politics of Time: Modernity and Avant-Garde* (London: Verso, 1995), 115–16. This book has been important for the writing of this essay.

development of the "State as a realization of Spirit." This is, perhaps, one of the reasons why Hegel recapitulates it at the end of his *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, for world history is a matter not only of historical form but of state and subject forms, too. The power and attraction of Hegel's argument is intimately tied to its totalizing intent and to its ability to combine history, politics, and culture: his philosophically reflexive history of history is simultaneously a history of the reconfiguration of subjects as they are institutionalized juridico-politically in family, civil society, corporations, and state. The idea of development, moreover, endows the "cunning of reason"—the unintended consequences of actions—with dynamic continuity in change (necessity). This is the point of Hegel's history (as against "original" and "reflective" history): to reveal its *rational* character.²³ But this is also the point—Hegel's panlogism—at which the criticisms of Adorno and Ricoeur coincide, although for different reasons.

As we have seen, Adorno inverts the significance of the unfolding of the history of spirit in Hegel's prose, making it instead a history of the subordination of particulars by right. He suggests, in other words, that we read Hegel's work not as a history of freedom's realization but as a history of repressive state apparatuses. In this, Adorno follows Marx's methodological injunction to "invert" Hegel's dialectic, which he does so literally by applying it to the work of Hegel himself. Marx, however, did not merely invert, or materialize, Hegel's idealist history; his "translation" (for want of a better word) also displaces it both socially and politically, shifting attention away from spirit as state form and juridico-political subjectivity, first to civil society (for example, in his "Critique of Hegel's Doctrine of the State"), subsequently to a notion of economic structure conceived as the contradictory combination of forces and relations of production (in *The German Ideology*—where Marx insists that world history is the product of the market and an international division of labor²⁴—and the preface to his *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*), and finally to capital and the commodity form (in the *Grundrisse* and *Capital*). A constant theme of Marx's "inversion" is that Hegel's own philosophical system is itself the product

23. In *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, Hegel writes, "The *necessity* in ideality is the *development* of the Idea within itself; as *subjective* substantiality, it is the [individual's] political *disposition*, and as *objective* substantiality—in contrast with the former—it is the *organism* of the state, the *political* state proper and its constitution" (288). For a good account of "original" and "critical" histories in Hegel's text, see McCarney, *Hegel on History*, 10–15.

24. See Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The German Ideology*, ed. C. J. Arthur (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1977), 58.

of uneven development: the economic underdevelopment—or “backwardness”—of Germany compensated for in thought.²⁵ Nevertheless, not only does Marx outline his own developmentalist world history, which passes through the same “worlds” as the “course” of Hegel’s, but now as a series of stages conceived as modes of production (oriental, slave, feudal, and capitalist); he also at times seems to have been overcome by Hegel’s prose, substituting *capital* for *spirit* or *Idea* in his account of its logic and development.²⁶ This kind of “inversion” of Hegel is the source of Althusser’s complaint: it is not materialist enough, and Hegelianism remains (although “on its head”). Like spirit, for example, capital is fundamentally—that is, substantively—temporal, it “strives . . . to annihilate this space [the “whole earth,” says Marx] with time”²⁷—its time: in the reality of exchange, the value form is indifferent to difference, that is, it is actualized *in* difference (which it thus simultaneously erases and maintains).²⁸ On another level, Marx also refers to “the great civilizing influence of capital,”²⁹ a sentiment that echoes similar “developmentalist” comments made about the French imperial campaign in Mexico, the British in India, the independence campaign of Simón Bolívar in South America, among others, in which European colonial powers act as formative spiritual influences (by bringing their recipients up to date—for example, economically).³⁰

As Arthur notes, Marx’s work is characterized by a fundamental tension between the historicist (developmentalist) and systematic sides of its dialectic—the site in his thought, perhaps, of the contradiction between uni-

25. For a critique of this position, see Cheah, *Spectral Nationality*.

26. The experimental *Grundrisse*’s (trans. Martin Nicolaus [Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1977]) historical contents on precapitalist modes of production closely follow the “course” of Hegel’s history. See also Marx’s systematic dialectical account of the value form—passing through the commodity, money, capital, and back—in *Capital*, whose key intertext is probably Hegel’s *Science of Logic*. See Christopher Arthur’s important *The New Dialectic and Marx’s Capital* (Boston: Brill, 2002).

27. Marx, *Grundrisse*, 539. This is an idea recently taken up by Antonio Negri in his account of the crisis—of measurability—in Marx’s labor theory of value in a context of the total subsumption of the social by imperial capital. See his *Time for Revolution*, trans. Matteo Mandarini (New York: Continuum, 2003).

28. At this level, the commodity form needs difference. Thus, contra critics such as Althusser, Arthur, in *The New Dialectic and Marx’s “Capital,”* shows how, from the perspective of Marx, Hegel’s “Idea” is a fetishized rendering of self-valorizing capital.

29. Marx, *Grundrisse*, 409.

30. Interesting, more or less defensive accounts of which are to be found in Ahmed Aijaz, *In Theory: Classes, Nations, Literatures* (London and New York: Verso, 1992); and José Aricó, *Marx y América Latina* (Mexico City: Alianza Editorial Mexicana, 1982).

versality and its limitation referred to by Bernasconi. But Marx is also writing from a newly temporalized world-historical perspective, relocating “universality” as an emancipatory horizon beyond the here and now of capital-and-spirit: “Furthermore,” he points out, “the universality toward which it [capital] irresistibly strives encounters barriers in its own nature, which will, at a certain stage of its development, allow it to be recognized as being itself the greatest barrier to this tendency, and hence will strive towards its own suspension.”³¹ The crucial question here is what kind of subject will secure the historical movement into such a future.

Two important ideas suggest that Marx models this account of the expanding developmentalist logic of capital (“it”) on spirit: first, capital seems to develop out of and through itself (the self-valorizing logic of accumulation) across barriers of its own making; and, second, it strives toward universality and freedom. Both ideas, moreover, combine to produce a developmental logic with emancipatory intent: freedom out of necessity. They do so, however, by *negating* the eternalized present of capital in the name of a *different future present*. This is because capital is only self-realizing as exploitation, producing an alienated social totality. In other words, Marx inverts (philosophically), relocates (socially), and retemporalizes (politically) Hegel’s dialectic—such that today, for example, in times of the “no-time” of network capitalism, we might want to think of “the cunning of capital.”³²

At this point, however, Marx’s negation of the present of capital from the perspective of a different future—his “translation” of Hegel—vacates the historical and philosophical locus of both spirit and capital, potentially replacing it with another grounding idea: labor.³³ History can now become the “course” of the realization of its principle as freedom. Within Marxist traditions, labor, in a world-historical sense, has usually been represented socially and politically as an embodied subject—the proletariat—considered *negatively*, that is, as both the product of capital and as its negation (the “negation of the negation” on which capital depends), and thus the subject of a postcapitalist *development* in history. In Hegel’s words again, only this subject would be an “adequate” expression of such an idea. An important

31. Marx, *Grundrisse*, 410.

32. See Manuel Castells, *The Rise of Network Society* (Cambridge, Mass., and Oxford: Blackwell, 1997).

33. In *Spectral Nationality*, Cheah shows how labor is the conceptual heir of the organic concepts of “culture” (Kant) and “spirit” (Hegel). He does not include “capital” in this history.

aspect of Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri's *Empire* is to suggest retrospectively that the political figure of the proletariat qua industrial worker, so privileged as the subject of freedom in communist traditions, in fact reified and imposed a specific historical incarnation of capitalist labor as universal (one that, moreover, also functioned as a powerful modernizing image). As we shall see below, such a hypostatization of the subject of freedom—and its cultural implications—is crucial for subalternist criticism, too. Negri's post-Marxist thought, however, also gives the so-called materialist inversion of Hegelianism a further twist. Indeed, in his view, "living labor" (and its political correlate, "the multitude") is a founding ontological force, a constituent power (the power of labor power). Rather than a negativity, it is an autonomous positivity. This is the basis of Negri's subjectivist (and ontologizing) criticism of what he considers the objectivist teleological trend in Marx's *Capital*: in his view, the multitude—neither capital nor the Imperial state—is the real subject of value and social cooperation.³⁴ If, in one move, Negri thus retreats from a positive account of historical development through a succession of stages conceived as modes of production, it returns in another, now political, tone, as he takes over, romanticizes, and ontologizes Mario Tronti's original worker-centered philosophy of history, conceptualized as "refusal."

In "The Strategy of Refusal," Tronti observes that "capitalist power seeks to use the workers' antagonistic will-to-struggle as a motor of its own development . . . exploitation is born, historically, from the necessity of capital to escape from its *de facto* subordination to the class [of] worker-producers." And more: "it is the directly political thrust of the working class that necessitates economic development on the part of capital." This "political thrust" is what Tronti refers to as "refusal": "What are workers doing when they struggle against their employers? Aren't they, above all, saying 'No' to the transformation of labour power into labour?" The always-already-given potentiality for refusal is the living reminder that, in fact, the working class, while not the ruling class, is most definitely the historically dominant one; it simultaneously "provokes" the bourgeoisie into existence as a class beyond competition and "provides" capital with its laboring subject. Capital, meanwhile, responds to refusal "with continual technological 'revolutions' in the organisation of work," that is, by generating "development"—because, for capital, less (class) is more (value).³⁵ Capitalist development, in Tronti's

34. See my "Empire, or Multitude: Transnational Negri," *Radical Philosophy* 103 (September/October 2000): 29–39, from which I have adopted these two paragraphs.

35. Mario Tronti, "The Strategy of Refusal," trans. Red Notes, in "Italy: Autonomia; Post-Political Politics," special issue, *Semiotexte* 3, no. 3 (1980): 29–31. "It is the workers'

view, is thus the result of bourgeois *resistance* to the power of labor and can be tracked in its tendential subsumption to fixed capital in the form of machinery and planning, the attempt by the bourgeoisie to do away with the labor it depends upon. However, in both Tronti's and Negri's texts—including *Empire*—the figures of the mass and socialized worker-militants have a tendency to become entrapped in the negative—technological and modernizing—image of labor and the multitude's own historical positivity, that is, in a developmentalism that focuses on and generalizes the experience of workers of the most "advanced" capitalist sectors to the political detriment of others. Development in history thus paradoxically reappears through the back door of the political avant-garde as the future realization of the given.³⁶

For his part, Ricoeur takes little note of Marx's critical inversion of Hegel's history in the collective singular, and includes him only in a general "exodus" from Hegelianism. His criticism focuses, first, on the post-philosophical character of modern history and its relation to narrativity, and, second, on the contemporary impossibility of totalization. Both are related, he suggests, in the idea of the rationality of the real, which "alone authorizes" positing an "ultimate goal" unfolding out of spirit's self-realization as freedom (*TN*, 195). Scientific history cannot accept such a teleological presupposition, that is, it cannot be so conceptually linked to future freedom (which, in turn, is Walter Benjamin's complaint³⁷). Actions and their meanings, Ricoeur insists, can never be read off from the present that produced them, no matter how "cunning" the interpretation: their "otherness" in this respect must be recognized. If this opens up to thought a domain of indeterminate political action, it is not one that Ricoeur seeks to occupy—unlike

struggle that materially imposes reformism on capital . . .," says Negri in "Labor in the Constitution," written originally in 1964 but not published until the mid-1970s. In this essay, Negri develops the political side of the effects of refusal: "Labor, as a source of complete social production, becomes a source of the State. . . . Not even right and law can escape its power." In Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Labour of Dionysus: A Critique of State Form* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), 82.

36. Indeed, Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri's *Empire* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2000), constantly tends—historically and politically—toward the philosophy of world history it nevertheless refuses, retreating—or breaking down—into a descriptive empiricism of what it asserts to be a unified multiplicity ("the one and the many"). For Marx, furthermore, especially in *Capital*, labor is only constituted as a subject by capital (as variable capital); which means that it is only in this form that labor occupies the same conceptual space as Hegel's "spirit."

37. See Walter Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History," in *Illuminations*, trans. H. Zohn (London: Fontana/Collins, 1979).

Althusser. Most important, as we have seen, however, is the crisis in Eurocentrism that upholds both Hegel's concept of reason and his developmentalist narrative. What Ricoeur's statement misses, however, is the historical emergence of development as imperial state policy in the years immediately following the Second World War in the United States, from where new—neo-colonial—totalizations of the world might be produced, that is, an ongoing history of “freedom” as imposed reformation—*more development*.

As we have seen, the modern idea of development has been central not only to the prose of world history, endowing it with a civilizational grammar and direction, but also to the inter- or transnational experience and administration of capitalism as it ideologically captures historical time and deploys it as means. Recent work on “developmentalism” has tended to privilege this administrative dimension, concentrating particularly on post-Second World War international policy, beginning, for example, with the Truman Doctrine of 1947, which was drafted and imposed in the context of the Cold War and widespread anticolonial struggles, within the parameters of U.S. national security considerations. In such a milieu, according to Arturo Escobar, combating hunger and malnutrition in newly conceptualized “underdeveloped societies” located in “the South” became the prime concern of an emerging power-knowledge formation that would include, for example, area studies, as well as a whole set of knowledges and practices marshaled as “rational techniques” for their “construction and treatment.”³⁸ In the words of Edward Said, on whose Foucaultian account of Orientalism this critique of developmentalism is modeled, such a knowledge formation is not merely a discourse but rather a world-wide “corporate institution.” From this perspective, the Imperial dimension of developmentalist policy, intimately tied to theories of modernization—such as the well-known “stages theory” of W. W. Rostow, so important for the formulation of Kennedy's policy response to the Cuban Revolution, the Alliance for Progress—is foregrounded and perceived as a form of neocolonialism in biopolitical mode: it seeks to manage “life” in the so-called Third World. This is the context for the writing of many of the authors considered here, from Althusser to the subalternists, passing through Ricoeur's recognition of the connection between colonialism and development, as well as Adorno's own writings, including the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, which, from this perspective, arguably constitutes a critical rewriting (in the form of an “inversion”) of Hegel's

38. Arturo Escobar, *Encountering Development: The Making and Unmaking of the Third World* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1995), 3–20.

philosophy of history, as a history of domination, from the point of view of a post-European “new world.”³⁹

Althusser's Interruption

Althusser was one of the foremost and influential critics of Hegelianism, especially as it had impacted Marxism and the Communist movement. Writing in the 1960s, his work constitutes one of the great structuralist rereadings of the time—in his case, of Marx. Although not engaged with a critique of Eurocentrism, Althusser was, nevertheless, interested in the logics of uneven development. Under the sign of scientificity, his engagement with Marx's work was designed to constitute historical materialism as a science of the history of social formations established on the basis of its own concepts, free, especially, from Hegelian interference. His anti-Hegelianism was thus central to such a constitution. Two ideas are particularly important here. First, “overdetermination,” which is a transitional concept, Althusser insists, since it is borrowed from psychoanalysis. It is, nevertheless, crucial to thinking his second anti-Hegelian idea, “uneven development,” taken from the Leninist tradition of political Marxism, especially as it was reemerging as a key contemporary concern with Maoism.⁴⁰ Both these ideas of overdetermination and uneven development then combine to produce the idea of differential historical temporalities—a radical denarrativization of historical development from within a single identifiable temporal matrix (as is the case in Hegel's world history). Althusser's conceptual “development” takes place in the shift from the predominantly political tone of *For Marx* to the predominantly philosophical tone of *Reading Capital*, and back.

One of the central concerns of Althusser's *For Marx* is the character of the dialectic that emerges from Marx's injunction to “invert” and materialize Hegel's version, and within that, the character of the contradiction(s) that informs and makes a social totality. Althusser insists that, in its Marxist sense, contradiction is never simple, nor is it defined by relations of *interiority* (that is, as a self-relation) that unfold their essence teleologically. Instead, the “complex whole has the unity of a structure articulated in domi-

39. Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, trans. John Cumming (London and New York: Verso, 1979).

40. In my view, Althusser is the theoretician of political Marxism conceived as the expression of the experience of uneven development. Paradoxically, in this regard, one might say that he is rethinking Marxism from within a tradition that emerged from what Gramsci referred to as the “revolution against *Capital*.”

nance.”⁴¹ Althusser’s approach thus intends to definitively take us beyond the Hegelian paradigm. Each of the levels of the social totality—economic, political, ideological—is defined with a degree of relative autonomy, and so in multiple relations of *exteriority*. The idea of overdetermination is crucial here, since it provides for the “merging” of different contradictions in structured relations of dominance and subordination such that “it cannot be claimed that these contradictions and their fusion are merely the *pure phenomena* of the general contradiction” (*FM*, 100). In other words, the “simple” contradiction that structures the relations of production, for example, cannot provide the key to contradictions operating at other levels of the social, for example, in the superstructure, because the latter have their own “consistency and effectivity” (*FM*, 100) (hence, too, the idea of the “articulation” of predefined elements rather than their mediated constitution). In *For Marx*, Althusser is thus making desperate theoretical attempts to escape “determination in the last instance” by the economic (from this philosophical point of view, a specter of Hegelian simplicity that haunts Marxism’s desire for analytic complexity).

In *Reading Capital*, meanwhile, the “consistency” of each of these levels of the social formation, further complicated by the copresence of different modes of production, is endowed with its own specific temporality. Althusser insists that none may be translated back into a single, all-defining historical time: “We should not deduce from this that history is made up of the juxtaposition of different ‘relatively’ autonomous histories, different historical temporalities, living the same historical time . . . the ideological model of a continuous time subject to essential sections into presents.”⁴² This is because the idea that an “essential” spirit may define the whole is, of course, a mark of the Hegelianism he opposes. The social formation is here defined by its radical temporal heterogeneity, whose historical unity qua social formation it is, however, difficult to conceive. Althusser goes on to develop this idea further as an “aleatory materialism” in his studies of Machiavelli.⁴³ Thus, *difference buries development*—but only for it to reappear, as we shall see, in another political form. As Perry Ander-

41. Louis Althusser, *For Marx*, trans. Ben Brewster (London: New Left Books, 1977), 206. I will refer in particular to the essay “Contradiction and Overdetermination,” 87–129. Hereafter, this work is cited parenthetically as *FM*.

42. Louis Althusser and Etienne Balibar, *Reading Capital*, trans. Ben Brewster (London: Verso, 1979), 104.

43. Louis Althusser, *Machiavelli and Us*, trans. Gregory Elliot (London and New York: Verso, 1999), 18.

son suggests, the lack of a principle of unification around a shared "societal time" threatens to leave Althusser with "a mere empirical pluralism: a variegated host of 'circumstances' and 'currents.'" Anderson's alternative is twofold. First, he proposes the formal but "scientific" idea of chronological time. Second, and most important here, he proposes the experience of unevenness in the development of capitalism, which traverses and structures all social formations considered mainly as separate nation-states. He will go on to flesh out this position, for example, in his response to Marshall Berman's account of modernity, producing a historically more nuanced account of an "overdetermined configuration" characterized by the copresence of "different temporalities." This is the significance of the idea of "conjuncture." Coined by Althusser, it gives uneven development a momentary, *political* unity.⁴⁴

The concept of overdetermination constitutes an attempt to unify the centripetal logic of uneven development in Althusser's sense, and does so *politically* in the related idea of "conjuncture"—in other words, it provides for a political totalization of the social.⁴⁵ In *For Marx*, Althusser counterposes Lenin's analyses of the political conjuncture that made the Russian Revolution possible to the antipolitical historicism of Hegel's analysis of the Roman World in *The Philosophy of History*. The problem with Hegel's dialectic is that it is moved by a *simple* contradiction. And it is simple because it is structured by relations of *interiority*. Complexity in Hegel's account, even the multiplicity of determinations configuring any particular "world," is an illusion, since spirit is self-positing and self-centered. For Hegel, Althusser notes, the "mighty history" of Rome is "nothing but the temporal manifestation of the internal principle of the *abstract legal personality* and then its *destruction*" (*FM*, 102). Furthermore, each present may contain the past, but not as an "*effective determination different from itself*" (*FM*, 102). This is the moment of eternalization referred to above. The concept of overdeter-

44. Perry Anderson, *Arguments within English Marxism* (London: Verso, 1980), 77–78; and "Marshall Berman: Modernity and Revolution," in *A Zone of Engagement* (London and New York: Verso, 1992), 25–55. For an overall critical commentary on Althusser and Anderson, see Osborne, *The Politics of Time*, 1–29. For its subsequent appearance in Néstor García Canclini's notion of "hybridity," see my "Hybridity in a Transnational Frame: Latin Americanist and Postcolonial Perspectives on Cultural Studies," in *The Latin American Cultural Studies Reader*, ed. Ana del Sarto, Alicia Ríos, and Abril Trigo (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2004), 736–59.

45. As Osborne has shown in *The Politics of Time*, this totalization is a synchronic one, defined by the temporality of the "instant." Hence the notorious difficulty in Althusser's account of thinking historical change.

mination, in contrast, refers to a complex unity of contradictions defined by relations of *exteriority*, mutual determination (in dominance), and thus irreducibility. He writes, "This is what is irreplaceable in Lenin's texts: the analysis of the structure of a *conjuncture*, the displacements and condensations of its contradictions and their paradoxical unity" (*FM*, 179). But Althusser, symptomatically, misses an important aspect of Hegel's internalizing principle of simple self-realization. In his account of the Roman World, Hegel does indeed foreground *abstract legal personality*, as follows:

The course of Roman History . . . involves the expansion of undeveloped subjectivity—inward conviction of existence—to the visibility of the real world. The principle of subjective inwardness receives positive application in the first place from without—through the particular volition of the sovereignty, the government, etc. The *development* consists in the purification of inwardness to abstract personality, which gives itself reality in the existence of private property; the mutually repellent social units can then be held together only by despotic power. The general course of the Roman World may be defined as this; the transition from the inner sanctum of subjectivity to its direct opposite. (*PH*, 281; my emphasis)

Abstraction, in Hegel's history, always implies a form of social abstraction, and is thus very concrete. Here, in particular, "abstract legal personality" refers to the emergence of the principle of private property and its political institution—individual freedom mediated by right. It is the latter, however, that is abolished by imperial despotism. The legacies of both sides of this relation—private property and empire, endowed with lives and a "consistency" beyond the "simple contradiction" noted by Althusser—are, of course, still crucial today, although Althusser may have missed them, blinded by Lenin's revolutionary conjuncture and the possibility of their abolition.⁴⁶ The keyword, however, is *development*. For it is what gives Hegel's simple contradiction, qua the history of spirit as the history of freedom, the unity and temporal logic of an immanent principle of self-realization. In other words, it temporalizes his history, accounting for what is *passed on* from one World ("civilization" or "mode of production") to the next. Althusser, in other words, misses the very term that structures Hegel's "simple" contra-

46. See Hardt and Negri, *Empire*; and William Spanos, *America's Shadow: An Anatomy of Empire* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000). As Spanos shows, private property is not the only legacy of the Roman Empire.

diction, and it returns to haunt his own account of the historical conjuncture. The problem is that such a developmentalist temporalization also structures Lenin's account of the conjuncture of the Russian Revolution, as well as both Althusser's and Anderson's conceptualization of the overdetermined unity of a conjuncture defined by "uneven development."

Conjuncture and Disjuncture

The time of the conjuncture is punctual, defined by its discontinuity. This is its political and philosophical point. But it also, arguably, subordinates historical analysis to the instrumental requirements of the balance of political forces (rather than, for example, to the principle of freedom). At the same time, however, a form of Marxist developmentalism threatens to return to temporalize the uneven present with regard to the future. If, on the one hand, Althusser's politicization of history restores the present's link to the future-as-other (de-eternalizing the present of development), on the other hand, it reintroduces a continuity—the idea of a revolutionary subject—founded on the developmentalism it negates. Lenin, he shows, was confronted by a complex situation defined by its uneven development: Russia was characterized by the coexistence of the most "advanced" with the most "backward," and thus was "pregnant with two revolutions" (*FM*, 97). Althusser lists the different elements that, according to Lenin, characterized the overdetermined moment of the revolutionary conjuncture in an attempt to account for the success of the Bolsheviks: industrial cities, with an organized militant working class, existing alongside the "medieval state of the countryside"; contradictions within the ruling classes: aristocratic nobility, lesser nobility, big and liberal bourgeoisie; as well as "an enormous mass of 'ignorant' peasants" (Althusser is quoting Lenin), a "circumstance which dictated a singular association of the peasant's revolt with the worker's revolution" (*FM*, 96). As each aspect of the social formation is described, each social class (or fraction of class) is endowed with historicity: some are associated with the persistence of the feudal past in the present, while others represent possible futures. The peasantry, in particular, is emptied of history, because their "ignorance" (lack of political *Bildung*) means they cannot constitute possible subjects of historical transformation, that is, of freedom, unless "associated" with the industrial workers, who thereby transform mere revolt into social revolution. Proletarian historicity thus depends on a narrative ordering and *temporal* reconstitution of the conjuncture (connecting it to both past and future), precisely what it was designed to forestall; and so

the “simple” principle of development returns, allocating political roles and organizing the conjuncture *historically*. In other words, the political and cultural work of “development” appears here to resolve a tension of its own making (to become a materialist development in and of “development”): on the one hand, it needs to think emancipation temporally beyond the present, in a way that allows for future difference, while on the other, simultaneously depending on that very same present for the subject of such a future.

Two of the latest works by historians to engage with these issues directly are Chakrabarty’s *Provincializing Europe* and Harry Harootunian’s *Overcome by Modernity*. If their intellectual horizon is constituted by the concept of modernity, what they in fact offer are not only the usual accounts of “the experience of modernity in . . .” (Bengal or Japan, in these cases) but also a set of detailed, complex reflections on the politics and culture of historical spatiotemporalization. In both works, the issue of “development,” as a key—but ideological—configuration of the time of capital on, and across, an inter- or transnational scale, is central to their critical concerns. Thus, empire also looms large, although differently—since India was colonized and Japan became a colonial power. In this respect, Chakrabarty and Harootunian are cultural historians with theoretical intent. The figure of Althusser, and his critique of Hegelian-inspired historicism, is crucial to both historians’ works. This means that their critiques of the idea of development have both political content and philosophical implications. Via the generalization of Anderson’s conjuncturalist account of modernism in Europe, for example, and with a little help from the likes of Benjamin and Henri Lefebvre for his concept of “everydayness,” Harootunian remains on a transnationalized Althusserian (and Marxist) terrain: the concept of overdetermination is fundamental to *Overcome by Modernity*’s theoretical edifice, and the concept of the “everyday” is what gives it concretion as a cultural experience. In *Provincializing Europe*, however, Chakrabarty takes the criticism of historicism further and arguably looks if not to abandon Marxism’s theoretical terrain definitively, and what he terms “a politics of despair,” at the very least to severely relativize and problematize it (revealing its provincialism), taking flight from Marxism’s own teleological narratives—that is, its “developmentalism” (a sign of Empire)—into the hands of a culturalist Heidegger and reflections on questions of cultural “belonging.” Chakrabarty thus attempts radically to relativize (and spatialize) this tradition’s notion of freedom and its emplotment. The importance of Althusser lies also, therefore, in that he provides the occasion to note a substantive theoretical difference in approach between *Provincializing Europe* and *Overcome by Modernity* with regard to thinking the poli-

tics of modern historical time and its historiography: although the concept of historical conjuncture as it is used by Harootunian, as well as the post-colonial concept of difference mobilized by Chakrabarty, marks the limits of historicist (and Imperial) narratives of the temporality of capital, that is, of development, it does so in a different way. Which is to say that if Harootunian advances a critical, cultural Marxist perspective on the temporal experience of modernity, Chakrabarty, for his part, engages with the cultural and political limitations of such a perspective. This, in other words, is the difference between *conjunctural* and *disjunctural* critiques of development.

Chakrabarty's *Provincializing Europe* emerges from his long association with the increasingly influential South Asian subaltern studies group of historians and critics, whose most well-known members have included Ranajit Guha, Partha Chatterjee, Gayatri Spivak, and Gyanendra Pandey. According to Guha, the practice of history emerged in India as a colonial project of juridico-political administration and state consolidation, tracing genealogies, lineages, and traditions all the better to recodify them, for example, along the lines of "the rule of property." In this sense, history has a clear disciplinary "civilizing" character. This is perhaps most clearly apparent in the historical treatment of peasant insurgency, assiduously tracked and documented by the state, for which, in Guha's words, "causality was harnessed to counter-insurgency and the sense of history converted into an element of administrative concern."⁴⁷ History is, therefore, linked to the state, the *colonial* state. The point of departure of such a critical "subalternist" perspective, its own key political concern, was that such a disavowal of peasant political subjectivity in history (both historically and historiographically), however modified, subsequently characterized both the nationalist and communist movements, too. The peasantry, and other mainly rural intermediate not-quite class formations, including so-called prepolitical banditry, and their varied forms of consciousness, were denied political agency or "maturity," that is, they were "subalternized"—put into the past for their lack of futurity as their very *presence* was traced (that is, narrativized *out* of history, only to be re-presented as "people without history"). The work of spectralization, indeed.

The sustained reflections of Guha (and other subalternist writers) engage with the European philosophical history of this developmentalist paradigm in Kant, Hegel, and Marx, at both political and philosophical

47. Ranajit Guha, *Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency in Colonial India*, 2nd ed. (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1999), 2–3.

levels.⁴⁸ But if, for example, Spivak's subalternist-Marxist critique of Marx in *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason* reveals the latter's developmentalism through a critique of his hesitant "civilizational" use of the idea of "the Asiatic mode of production,"⁴⁹ Chakrabarty aims not only at Marxist narratives of transition to capitalism, including such ideas as "incomplete" and "uneven" development, but also at the related "economic" heart of Marx's *Capital* itself: the theory of value and the social logic of abstraction. This, of course, is where he follows and exceeds—with a fundamental postcolonial twist—Althusser's own critical gesture. The idea is to show that "abstraction," like Hegel's "spirit"—whose history is the history of freedom—has determinate cultural-political content (and is thus not so abstract) that encodes the experience (and, arguably, the misrecognition) of the history of capitalism in Europe as a general emancipatory imperative—the form taken in subalternism of the idea that difference turns against development as more development. This is the sense in which their critique of development is also a critique of the imperial time of capital—its "spirit"—and its implications for political subjectivity.

If Chakrabarty would seem to retreat from emancipation in his response to such a myth of politico-cultural spiritual accumulation, Guha insists instead on the historicity of that political subject originally expelled from history (if not from poetry) by Hegel in his state-centered account: "the people." In Guha's view, the subaltern Indian people, as well as their political practice, exist "at the very limits of translatability of Western codes," that is, at "the historic threshold that the so-called universalism of a Eurocentric reason and its engine of global expansion—capital—failed to cross in the age of colonialism."⁵⁰ For Guha, the misrecognized "people"—the objects of both colonial and postcolonial nation-states, their historical narratives, and their policy (that is, the objects of the total apparatus of development)—nevertheless established an "autonomous domain" from which to historicize anew with political intent. Their "subaltern" character is not just an effect of their apparent subordination and ideological desubjectivization in colonial and nationalist perspectives but also emerges from their nonidentity with the class-based (and industrialized) subject positions of classical commu-

48. Both Guha and Chakrabarty also criticize the developmentalism of radical historians such as E. J. Hobsbawm and E. P. Thompson along similar lines.

49. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Towards a History of the Vanishing Present* (Cambridge, Mass., and London: Harvard University Press, 1999).

50. Ranajit Guha, introduction to *A Subaltern Studies Reader, 1986–1995*, ed. Ranajit Guha (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), xx.

nist theory and practice. For Guha, the notion of a subaltern “people” thus provides for both an alternative emancipatory political rationale and its historicity. It is this latter step that Spivak, for her part, refuses to make, suggesting that its danger may be to relocate the subalternized as subjects back inside the terms of a developmentalist script defined by their exclusion. From this perspective, Spivak insists on an epistemological break that, on the one hand, responds ethically to (and learns from) the political agency of the subalternized, while on the other, refuses to proceed to fabricate a new world-historical subject from them.

Translated back into Hegel's terms, subalternism, at its most radical, constitutes a critique of *a political rationality that endows historicity* and of *a historicity that endows political rationality*. That is, of a *Bildung* in which a particular history as a formative process is generalized as the universal condition of freedom and its subjects in the form of development. Such history, as posed by the logic of capital, says Chakrabarty, is the modern history of “Enlightenment universals,” universals that are fundamentally constitutive of the modern world, of thought, and of futures that “will be.” This he refers to as History 1. Albeit dominant, however, this is only one of the “many modes of being” in the world, of inhabiting a fundamentally—because, according to Heidegger, futural in a plurality of undisclosed ways—heterogeneous present: “futures that already *are* there, the futurity that humans cannot avoid aligning themselves with.” This he calls History 2. The function of Chakrabarty's concept of “difference” thus becomes clear in his nonhistoricist history: it seeks to reconnect the “local,” the affective experiences of “dwelling” and “belonging” to universality in a relation of *disjuncture*: these experiences “are what makes it impossible to sum up a present through any totalizing principle. They make the ‘now’ constantly fragmentary, but the fragments are not additive; they do not suggest a totality or a whole. The constant and open-ended modification of the future that ‘will be’ by the futures that ‘are’ parallels the ongoing modification of History 1 by History 2s.” With regard to Marx: one of Chakrabarty's suggestions to recover “difference,” a sort of culturalist kernel or “life-world,” within the logic of abstraction in Marx's *Capital*, is to read concrete, real labor (History 2)—a labor that “belongs” and “dwells,” stubbornly refusing dedifferentiation, and that lives, so to speak—against the developmentalist grain of the logic of abstract labor (History 1).⁵¹

51. Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe*, 47–51. As I have suggested above, however, the in-difference of value—including that of commodified (abstract) labor—works through (in-)difference.

In *Overcome by Modernity*, Harootunian also denarrativizes, and de-links the spatial connections of the “imperialist chain” that attempt to explain the emergence of Japanese fascism from the point of view of the “exceptional” character of its experience of capitalist modernity. His book ferociously criticizes such notions as “alternative modernity” and “uneven development” because, in the guise of radical criticism, they in fact sustain the normative myths of a “model” modernity or of “even” development. A study of Japanese interwar modernism, *Overcome by Modernity* does not provide an account of the rise of fascism as such but of one of its cultural and ideological conditions: a strong modernist antimodern intellectual formation responding to Japanese rapid industrialization, urbanization, and massification with thoughts of empire, militarism and communalism, authenticity and revolution. Harootunian insists that insofar as modernism expresses a crisis of both political and historical representation (denarrativization and respatialization were, Harootunian reminds us, modernist tropes) in a context whose horizon is defined by war, conservative and ethnically absolutist critiques of modernity are not intrinsically exceptional and/or specifically national. They occurred not only in Japan (and India, Chakrabarty might add) but also throughout Europe (and not only in Germany, Italy, or Spain) and the Americas. This idea is crucial to his overall theoretical argument. For one of the key points Harootunian makes is that there is *only* uneven capitalist development. Which means that the capitalist world cannot be spatially divided according to nations that develop either evenly or unevenly, because this would imply the existence of an embodied and locatable model “true time” (an idea, for example, of European nations held by implication in some forms of dependency theory). Uneven development is thus a matter of rates and speeds, but within and across each nation-state, rather than just between them. Japanese modernity is an “inflection of a larger global process,” a “co-eval modernity,” its modernisms (both revolutionary and conservative) the product of “the jarring co-existence of several pasts and the present in the now of everydayness, often in a relation of unevenness.”⁵² From Harootunian’s point of view, one might say that in fact the discourse of exceptionalism is itself a powerful form of reactionary modernism.

How does Harootunian put the idea of conjuncture to work in *Overcome by Modernity*? By limiting, denaturalizing, and repoliticizing the nor-

52. Harry Harootunian, *Overcome by Modernity: History, Culture, and Community in Interwar Japan* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2000). See, in particular, his methodological preface, “All the Names of History,” ix–xxxii.

mative effects of the rhetorics of development (which Harootunian himself at times maintains—he speaks of “late-developers,” for example) such that, now, with Chakrabarty’s work in view, possible futures emerge, first, from a present in which overlapping historical temporalities are gathered (that is, Anderson’s overdetermined conjuncture in which the past persists, the present is in flux, and the future uncertain),⁵³ and, second, from political and ideological conflict, where, the Japanese example makes clear, the “enlightenment universals” associated with the progressive developmentalist history of History 1 will *not* necessarily “be,” because a mobilized alliance of History 2s—a veritable war machine—might subordinate it to militarism, empire, and the “communal body.” The concept of conjuncture thus relocates difference, and History 2, alongside a dethroned History 1, in a complex and uncertain field of political possibility.

From the point of view of *Provincializing Europe*, however, Harootunian’s work would seem to re-present—and not only in its underlying narrativization of the overlapping temporalities that constitute the space of the present (past, present, and future with their corresponding social and political agencies)—an urban and Fordist-centered conception of modernity that may re-subalternize and ignore, for example, rural laborers (including peasants), who belong neither to a persistent “agrarian political order . . . with its semi-aristocratic ruling class (in Japan marked by the entrenchment of the emperor, the court, and those oligarchs who could claim the right domainal credentials)” nor to an urban-centered “emergent industrial capitalist system with its incipient labour movement.”⁵⁴ It is not that those so excluded necessarily represent an alternative, privileged subject of history in this context; it is, rather, that the temporalization involved within the overdetermined conjuncture thus fashioned writes them out of consideration as mere representatives of the past. Harootunian’s response might be, first, to question the ways in which Chakrabarty’s History 2 would seem to be “immune to the social abstractions of capitalism,”⁵⁵ that is, to what I have termed the “in-difference” of capital (particularly in its idealized conception of con-

53. See Harootunian, *Overcome by Modernity*: “But what distinguished this conjuncture most in Japan, and undoubtedly elsewhere, was the co-existence of the place between pre-capitalist pasts that had not yet disappeared with capitalism, industrialization in an indeterminate present being lived by large numbers of people in the cities, and, finally, an unenvisioned future that thinkers were trying to imagine on the basis of what had already changed” (xviii–xix).

54. Harootunian, *Overcome by Modernity*, xix.

55. Harootunian, *Overcome by Modernity*, xxvi.

crete labor, whose cultural embodiment only seems to signify disjuncture), and, second, to insist on the resistance to narrative generalization that the idea of conjuncture entails, its sensibility to “difference,” as well as to the political correlation of forces that establishes what “will be.” That, in other words, disjuncture needs conjuncture (which, as we have seen, also seems to need development). What both conceptions reveal, however, is the continuing ideological and conceptual power of the idea of development and the difficulty in theoretically overcoming the contradiction between the promise of freedom and its restriction that it bears.